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INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Fifty years ago the Negro people of the United States started out empty handed, without property, without education and with very little knowledge or experience, on a great adventure. Abraham Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation had given them their freedom, and the two war amendments to the constitution had made them citizens of the United States and given them the ballot. With these they started out in the new world so to speak to seek their fortunes which freedom had opened to them.

Although slavery and the Negro had been the real issue between the North and the South in the Civil War, when the war was over the Negro was not without friends in both sections of the country. There were numbers of people both in the South and in the North, who wished the Negro well, and were glad to advise him and help him to make his way under the new conditions in which he found himself.

The difficulty was that the two sections of the country held diametrically opposite notions as to the best way to proceed. In the long controversy which followed, the bewildered freedman was like a ball that is batted from one side to another by rival players in a game. The result was that the Negro got most of the knocks and, in the end, was thrown pretty much on his own resources and compelled to make his own way as best he could.

As was to be expected under the circumstances, the Negro, for a number of years, groped his way along and often strayed from the direct path, but in spite of all he made progress—great progress, in fact—when all the circumstances are considered.

It is my purpose, in the article which follows, to tell something of the progress which the Negro has made during these years in the matter of education, and to indicate, so far as I am able, the direction in which further progress may be expected in the future.

Let me say, to begin with, that one of the first and most important things which emancipation did for the Negro and the South

was to bring into existence a public school system. Previous to the Civil War there had been no public school system worthy of the name, in the slave states, so that, whatever anyone may say in regard to the wisdom or lack of wisdom in giving the Negro the ballot, it should not be forgotten that it was the Negro vote which gave the white man the public school.

Negro education began in the South, however, several years before there were any Negro votes or any public school system. A little army of Yankee school ma'ns followed in the wake of the Northern armies and, wherever the federal forces succeeded in establishing themselves on Southern soil, schools for the education of the freedmen were started.

It was in September, 1861, that the first school for freedmen was started in the South. This school, established by the American Missionary Association, was located at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, and it laid the foundation for the Hampton Institute, the first distinctively industrial school, so far as I know, to be established in the United States for either race.

After emancipation schools for the freedmen multiplied throughout the South, under the direction of the freedmen's bureau, which had charge of the education of the freedmen from 1865 to 1870, when its work was discontinued. Either under its direction, or in coöperation with it, there were established during this short period 2,677 schools with 3,300 teachers and 149,587 pupils.

Statistics give but a poor conception of the character of these early freedmen's schools. Most of them were located in abandoned buildings of some kind or other. Some of them were established in old army barracks; others were started in churches, and still others were held out in the open, under the shade of a convenient tree. Children and old men sat side by side upon the rude benches. Those who were not able to go to school in the daytime went to school at night, and those who could not find time to go to school during the other days in the week crowded into the Sabbath schools on Sunday.

Old blue back spellers were dug up out of odd corners into which they had been hidden away during slavery times and, with these and such other books as they could find, the whole race set out to master the mystery of letters. The most pathetic figures, in all the eager and excited throng which crowded into the school

rooms, were the old men and women who hoped before they died to be able to learn to read the one book of which they had any knowledge, namely, the Bible.

The first report of the United States commissioner was published in 1870. From the scattered and fragmentary figures and statements which it offers, one is able to gain some notion of the condition of the Negro schools at that time. In Alabama the report of the general superintendent of the freedmen's bureau, which the commissioner quotes, indicated that there were 155 schools, with 168 teachers and 11,531 pupils. At this time, also, Alabama had 49 Negro Sabbath schools, with 244 teachers and 8,744 pupils. The number of pupils paying tuition in the day schools was 633 and the amount of money collected from these pupils was \$1,248.95. By 1872 conditions had much improved. At this time there were enrolled in the colored schools of Alabama 54,334 pupils, with an average attendance of 41,308. This was an increase of 25,000 over the previous year.

In 1881, the year in which the Tuskegee Institute was started in Macon County, Ala., the condition of the schools throughout the state was not much better than it had been nine years before. There were 68,951 pupils enrolled, with an average attendance of 48,476. The average length of the school year in the public schools was seventy-eight days. Only about one-third of the Negro children of school age were enrolled in the schools and not more than 28 per cent were in actual attendance.

In South Carolina the Negro public schools in 1870 were not as far advanced, so far as one can judge from the reports, than they were in Alabama at the same period. The failure of the general assembly to pass a school bill had left the public schools without funds, and the report states that "the children of the state are growing up in ignorance." Reports from the counties showed that "the chief obstacles to an efficient school system are the want of funds, the indifference resulting from ignorance, and a deep-rooted prejudice on the part of both races to mixed schools." The superintendent of the freedmen's schools furnished information of the existence of eight schools for Negroes with an enrollment of 3,500. One of these was a freedmen's pay school supported entirely by colored people.

Directly after the war conditions in some of the Northern

States were not much better than they were in the South. In Illinois, for example, Negro children were almost wholly ignored in the common school legislation, except that a provision was made that the money paid by Negroes in the form of taxes should be applied to Negro education. In practice, however, this was not done. Still in some of the towns of the state adequate provision was made for the colored children. In Indiana Negro education was not much better provided for than in Illinois. The law provided that Negro children should be educated apart and, in accordance with this law, the city of Indianapolis set aside two school buildings for the use of the colored children, "although," the report adds, "they have been for several years out of use because of their unfitness."

On the other hand, the city of Baltimore, Md., had at this time 63 schools for colored children and in addition to this an efficient normal school with 5 teachers and 210 pupils. In other parts of the state, however, the colored public schools, so far as any indications given in the reports show, did not exist. The law provided that the money paid in taxes by colored people should be used for the education of the colored children. The records show that the sum of \$951.27, collected from Negro tax-payers in six counties, had been charged as paid out to colored schools, but there was no report of any such schools existing.

The vague and indefinite character of these reports suggests the condition and the character of the early Negro schools. This was to be expected. The Civil War had brought financial ruin to the Southern States; there was neither money nor means to build school houses and maintain schools. In some respects, in spite of their poverty and their ignorance, the freedmen were in a better situation than their former masters. They had, at least, the physical strength and training for rough work of the fields and it was this kind of labor that was necessary to make a beginning.

Besides all else the country was torn and distracted with political controversies, and public sentiment was indifferent when it was not hostile to Negro education. All of these facts should be considered when an attempt is made to estimate the progress of Negro education during these early years and since.

Notwithstanding these difficulties Negro education has made progress from the first. In 1877, when the first general summary

of the statistics of education in the Southern States was made, it appeared that there were 571,506 colored children and 1,827,139 white children enrolled in the public schools of the sixteen former slave states and the District of Columbia. By 1909 the number of children enrolled in the colored schools had increased to 1,712,137. This was, however, but 56.34 per cent of the total colored school population.

Meanwhile the illiteracy of the Negro in the Southern States has been reduced from something like 95 per cent of the whole population, at the beginning of freedom, to 33.3 per cent in 1910. In the United States as a whole the number of Negroes who could neither read nor write was at this time 30.4 per cent of the whole Negro population.

A further evidence of the progress which Negro education had made in forty-seven years is the number of high schools maintained for Negroes in different parts of the country. Not all of these, however, were located in the Southern States. Of the 141 colored high schools supported by states and municipalities, reported by the commissioner of education in 1910, there were 4 in Alabama, 6 in Arkansas, 1 in Delaware, 1 in the District of Columbia, 6 in Florida, 11 in Georgia, 7 in Kentucky, 8 in Mississippi, 1 in Maryland, 21 in Missouri, 3 in Oklahoma, 4 in South Carolina, 7 in Tennessee, 36 in Texas, 5 in Virginia, 5 in West Virginia. Besides these there were high schools for Negroes in other states: Illinois 4, Indiana 6, Kansas 1, Ohio 2, Pennsylvania 1.

Although the statistics indicate that Negro illiteracy has been steadily reduced until at the present time more than two-thirds of the whole Negro population is able both to read and write, this much could not have been accomplished unless the work of the public schools had been supplemented by that of other schools maintained by private philanthropy.

It is safe to say that, of the 34,000 Negro teachers now carrying on the work of the public schools in the South, the majority, if not all, of these who have obtained anything like an adequate training for their work, have been educated in schools that have been maintained, in whole or in part, by private philanthropy. The number of these schools has grown steadily with the growth of the public schools and especially in recent years there have sprung up a multitude of smaller academies and so-called colleges, supported

to a very large extent by the colored people themselves, which have supplemented and to some extent extended the work of the public schools.

As near as I am able to determine there are not fewer than 600 schools of various kinds, colleges, academies, industrial and professional schools, supported for the most part by private philanthropy in different Southern and Northern States. About 400 of these, I should say, are small schools which are doing the work of the public schools in the primary grades.

Of these smaller schools there are at present no statistics available to indicate the character and extent of the work they are doing. Of the 189 larger and more advanced schools of which there is record, the statistics show that they have 2,941 teachers and 57,915 pupils. Of the pupils in these schools, which include practically all of the institutions doing secondary college work, 19,654 are in the secondary grades; 3,214 are collegiate students, and 32,967 are in the elementary grades. In addition to these 2,080 are pursuing professional studies and 29,954 are getting industrial training of some sort or other.

Although the number of schools calling themselves colleges is relatively large the vast majority of their students are in the elementary or secondary grades. For example, in the 189 schools referred to in the foregoing paragraph, nearly 60 per cent are in the elementary grades and only 5.5 per cent are pursuing collegiate studies. In fact, up to 1910 a careful study of the Negro college graduates indicates that altogether, from 1820 to 1909, the number of Negroes who had completed a course of study in a college or a University was not more than 3,856 and of this number about 700 had graduated from Northern schools.

It has been estimated that since 1870 the sixteen former slave states have contributed about \$1,200,000,000 to the support of their public schools. Of this amount \$160,000,000 went to the support of the Negro schools.

I have not been able to determine with any accuracy the amount which has been contributed since emancipation to Negro education by religious and philanthropic agencies. As near as can be estimated it has amounted to about \$50,000,000. To this should be added about \$20,000,000 more which has been contributed by Negroes through their churches and other organizations.

The progress of Negro education has undoubtedly been more rapid during the past ten years than during any previous similar period. Not only have several Southern cities built and equipped first class high schools for the benefit of their colored populations, but there has also been a marked advance, particularly in recent years, in the character of the colored rural schools in many parts of the country. This has been due to the work of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund in coöperation with the county superintendents, the rural industrial schools and the colored people themselves, in the communities in which these schools are located.

A number of cities in the South, notably Louisville, Ky., have done much to put Negro education on a sound basis by the establishment of branch libraries for the use of their colored populations. Until very recently there have been few places in the South where Negroes have had access to any large collection of books. Even the Negro colleges have been able to provide few if any modern books for the use of their students. Recently several of the larger schools, through the generosity of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, erected handsome and commodious library buildings and are now gradually accumulating the books necessary for serviceable working and reference libraries.

The total annual expenditures for Negro education at the present time indicate to some extent the efficiency of Negro education, although Rural School Supervisor Tate, of South Carolina, says that, after a careful study of the conditions of the rural schools he has reached the conclusion that a large part of the money expended by South Carolina is wasted.

He says in his report for 1911 and 1912: "During the year I have visited many schools in which three hours of demonstration work and practical suggestion would double the efficiency of an earnest but inexperienced teacher. The education of the Negro in South Carolina," he adds, "is in the hands of the white race. The white trustees apportion the funds, select the teachers and receive the reports. The county superintendent has the supervision of these schools in his hands. We have expended this year \$349,834.60 in the support of the Negro schools. I have never visited one of these schools without feeling that we were wasting a large part of this money and neglecting a great opportunity."

The total expenditures for Negro schools in the United States

in 1911 and 1912 amounted to \$13,061,700. Of this amount the sum of \$8,645,846 was contributed to the support of the public schools by the sixteen former slave states, the District of Columbia and Oklahoma. The total amount expended by states and municipalities for secondary and higher education was \$758,972. To this sum should be added \$299,267, contributed by the federal government and \$3,359,615 from other sources, making the total expenditures for the secondary and higher education of the Negro in the United States as a whole, \$4,415,854. Negroes represent 11 per cent of the population and receive about 2 per cent of the school funds for their education.

I have tried, in what I have written thus far, to indicate, so far as it is possible to do so by means of statistics and formal statements, the progress which the Negro has made in education during the fifty years of freedom. There have, however, been so much change and progress in Negro education that no statistics, which merely show for schools or the proportion of children in the schools, can give any adequate account.

If I were asked what I believe to be the greatest advance which Negro education has made since emancipation I should say that it had been in two directions: first, the change which has taken place, among the masses of the Negro people, as to what education really is and, second, the change that has taken place, among the masses of the white people, in the South, toward Negro education itself.

I can perhaps make clear what I mean by a little explanation. The Negro learned in slavery to work but he did not learn to respect labor. On the contrary, the Negro was constantly taught, directly and indirectly during slavery times, that labor was a curse. It was the curse of Canaan, he was told, that condemned the black man to be for all time the slave and servant of the white man. It was the curse of Canaan that made him for all time "a hewer of wood and drawer of water." The consequence of this teaching was that, when emancipation came, the Negro thought freedom must, in some way, mean freedom from labor.

The Negro had also gained in slavery some general notions in regard to education. He observed that the people who had education for the most part belonged to the aristocracy, to the master class, while the people who had little or no education were usually of the class known as "poor whites." In this way education became

associated, in his mind, with leisure, with luxury, and freedom from the drudgery of work with the hands.

Another thing that the Negro learned in slavery about education was that it was something that was denied to the man who was a slave. Naturally, as soon as freedom came, he was in a great hurry to get education as soon as possible. He wanted education more than he wanted land or property or anything else, except, perhaps, public office. Although the Negro had no very definite notion in regard to education, he was pretty sure that, whatever else it might be, it had nothing to do with work, especially work with the hands.

In order to make it possible to put Negro education on a sound and rational basis, it has been necessary to change the opinion of the masses of the Negro people in regard to education and labor. It has been necessary to make them see that education which did not, directly or indirectly, connect itself with the practical daily interests of daily life could hardly be called education. It has been necessary to make the masses of the Negroes see and realize the necessity and importance of applying what they learned in school to the common and ordinary things of life; to see that education, far from being a means of escaping labor, is a means of raising up and dignifying labor and thus, indirectly a means of raising up and dignifying the common and ordinary man. It has been necessary to teach the masses of the people that the way to build up a race is to begin at the bottom and not at the top, to lift the man furthest down, and thus raise the whole structure of society above him.

On the other hand, it has been necessary to demonstrate to the white man in the South that education does not "spoil" the Negro, as it had been so often predicted that it would. It was necessary to make him actually see that education makes the Negro not an idler or spendthrift, but a more industrious thrifty, law-abiding and useful citizen than he otherwise would be.

As there never was any hope of educating the great mass of the Negroes in the South outside of the public schools, so there was no hope of a thoroughly efficient school system until the Southern white man was convinced that Negro education was of some real value, not only to the Negro himself, but also to the community.

The task of changing the popular opinion of both races in the South in regard to the value and meaning of Negro education, has

fallen very largely to the industrial schools. The first great task of these schools has been to teach the masses of the Negro people that every form of labor is honorable and that every form of idleness is disgraceful. The second great task has been to prove to the masses of the Southern people, by actual living examples, that money invested in Negro education pays, when that education is real and not a sham.

As far as the masses of the Negro people are concerned, this task is pretty nearly completed. There was a time at Tuskegee when parents objected to their children doing work with the hands in connection with their school work. They said they wanted their children to study books, and the more books and the bigger the books, the better they were satisfied. At the present time at Tuskegee, the work in the shops and on the farm is just as interesting, just as much sought after by pupils, as work in the class room. So great has been the change in the attitude of the masses of the people in this regard that a school which does not advertise some sort of industrial training finds it difficult to get students. At the present time almost every Negro school teaches some sort of industry and the number of schools which advertise themselves as industrial institutes is constantly increasing. There are, for example, not fewer than four hundred little schools in the South today which call themselves industrial schools, although, in many instances, these schools are doing little, if anything more, in the direction of industrial training than the public schools.

But if there has been a change in the opinion of the masses of the colored people in regard to education, there has been an equally great change in the attitude of the Southern white people in regard to the education of the Negro.

There never was a time when the thoughtful, sober people in the South did not perceive the necessity of educating the Negro, not merely for the sake of the Negro himself, but for the sake of the South. Some of the strongest and wisest friends of Negro education have been men who were born or lived in the South. The Hon. William H. Rufner, who inaugurated the first public school system in Virginia and was state superintendent of education in that state from 1870 to 1882, made a strong and statesmanlike plea for the education of all the people, black and white, in his first annual report. From that day to this there have always been wise

and courageous men in the South who were ready at all times to go out of their way to urge the necessity of giving the Negro equal opportunities with the white man, not only for education but also for advancement in every other direction.

On the other hand it can not be denied that the mass of Southern white people have been until recent years, either positively hostile or else indifferent toward Negro education.

No one who studied the trend of opinion in the South can fail to realize that there has been a great change in the attitude of the white people of the South in regard to the education of the Negro within, say, the last five years. There is every evidence, at the present time, that the Southern people have determined to take up in a serious way the education of the Negro, and the black man is to have better opportunities, not only in the matter of education, but also in every other direction.

One indication of this changed attitude is the fact that all through the South state and county superintendents are beginning to take a more real and active interest in the progress of the Negro schools. Five Southern States have already appointed assistant state superintendents of schools whose sole duty will be to look after the interest of the Negro schools. In many instances Negro supervisors have been appointed to assist the county superintendents in the work of improving the Negro schools. Usually these Negro supervisors have been supported, in whole or in part, by funds furnished by the Anna T. Jeanes Fund for the improvement of the colored rural schools.

As an indication of the interest which this work among the colored rural schools has aroused, I can not do better than quote from a recent letter written by County Superintendent Oliver, of Tallapoosa County, Ala., and published in the *Alabama Progressive School Journal*, at Birmingham, Ala. Superintendent Oliver says:

Perhaps no one thing has claimed the attention of our educators of late that means more for our rural schools than efficient school supervision. If anything more was needed to convince me of its supreme importance I have but to call to mind what it has done for our colored schools in Tallapoosa County during the present scholastic year.

Learning that Dr. J. H. Dillard, of New Orleans, was president of the Negro Rural School Fund, founded by Anna T. Jeanes, I opened correspondence with him, resulting in securing Prof. Thomas J. Edwards for this purpose, his expenses being defrayed by this Fund.

On November 1, 1911, Edwards reported to me for work. After mapping out his line of work, Edwards commenced visiting the colored schools in the country, making weekly reports to me, and getting further directions for each ensuing week. He commenced at once to organize in each colored school visited a school improvement association, coöperative corn and cotton clubs, where school children and patrons cultivate the grounds, taking lessons in agriculture at the same time, and agreeing that the proceeds arising therefrom should enure to the benefit of the school in equipping the same and extending the school term, introducing manual training, both for boys and girls.

Edwards kept me fully posted as to his work, and it is simply wonderful how much has been accomplished in a short time.

I have visited several of his schools in person and the improvement is most striking. The school yards have been cleared and planted in trees and flowers; corn clubs have been organized and work done on the little farms, and manual art and domestic science introduced into most of these schools, where wood work, raffia and straw basket making and sewing are being learned by the children, who seem cheerful, industrious and making progress, while this work does not seem to decrease their interest in their books.

About two months ago an exhibition of work done in these schools was given in the colored Baptist church in Dadeville, and it was a revelation and a surprise to all attending. The several schools vied with each other. In the exhibits could be seen axe handles, shuck foot-mats, etc., executed by the boys, who told of what they were doing on the school farms; while girls showed baskets and hats of all sizes and shapes wrought from raffia, straw and shucks, as well as all kinds of needle work, from the coarsest fabrics to the finest hand work in center pieces.

This general interest brought about by social contact and community coöperation has resulted in lengthening school terms from two to three months and the organization and establishment of the Tallapoosa County Colored Fair, to be held in New Adka community, in this county, on November 14-15, 1912. An extensive premium list has already been printed and circulated, offering premiums to successful contestants where the purpose is to encourage the manual arts in schools and increase agricultural production by colored farmers.

I have quoted this letter of Superintendent Oliver at some length for two reasons: first because it gives a succinct description of the manner in which industrial education is now being introduced through the agency of the Jeanes Fund, into colored schools in many parts of the South and, second, because it illustrates, better than any words that I am able to write, the sort of interest and enthusiasm which the effort to improve the public schools in modern and practical ways has created among the members of both races in the South.

I ought to add that Mr. T. J. Edwards, the supervising teacher mentioned in this letter, is a graduate of Hampton Institute and was employed for several years at Tuskegee Institute, where he did a similar work in the county immediately around that school.

What makes this letter interesting from another point of view is that it is written by a man who is dealing at first hand with Negro education in the county of which he is superintendent. The interest which Mr. Oliver has expressed in the work of the Negro schools is, for that reason, representative of the sentiment of the average intelligent citizen of the county and illustrates the new interest of the average intelligent and public spirited white man in the South on the subject of Negro education. I mention this fact because it is the opinion of the average white man that is going to determine, in the long run, the extent to which the Negro school is going to secure the consideration and support of the state and the community in the work which it is trying to do.

What, you may ask, has brought about this change of sentiment of the average white man toward the colored school?

One thing that has done as much as anything else to bring about the change has been the demonstration farming movement. Demonstration farming has taught the average farmer the importance of applying science and skill to the work of the farm and he has argued that, what this sort of education has done for the white farmer it will also do for the colored farmer. He has foreseen, also, that the education which makes the Negro a better farmer will make the South a richer community. That is one reason that the average Southern white man has come to take an interest in Negro education.

Another thing that has helped to bring about this change is that the Southern white man has seen for himself the effects of Negro education upon the Negro.

There is no way in which industrial schools, like Hampton and Tuskegee, have done more to change the sentiment of both races in regard to education and so prepare the way for the building up of a real and efficient system of Negro education in the South than in the character of the graduates that have gone out from these schools and from others, to work in the rural communities as teachers and leaders, and to illustrate in their own lives the practical value of the education they have obtained.

In referring in this way to the manner in which the industrial schools have helped to change sentiment and create sympathy for Negro education among the masses of the white people in the South I do not intend to say that the graduates of other institutions, with different aims, have not done their part. I merely intend to emphasize the fact that the industrial schools have made it part of their program to connect the work in the schools with the practical interests of the people about them, and that they have everywhere sought to emphasize the fact that the function of the school is not merely to teach a certain number of class room studies to a certain number of students, but to use the school as a means for building up and improving the moral and material life of the communities in which these schools are located.

In conclusion let me add that, although much has been accomplished in the past, much still remains to be done. We have not yet obtained in the South anything like the results we can and should obtain under a thoroughly efficient system of public schools.

Not since the Christian missionaries set out from Rome to Christianize and civilize the people of western Europe, I am almost tempted to say, has there ever been a social experiment undertaken on so large a scale as that which was begun fifty years ago with the founding of the first Negro school in the South. As yet that experiment is but half completed. No one can yet say what Negro education can accomplish for the Negro and the South because Negro education has never been thoroughly tried.

At last, however, it seems as if the time had come when white people and colored people, North and South, might come together in order to take up really and seriously the work which was begun with the emancipation of the slaves. If this is true, then, this fact indicates better than any statistics can possibly do, the progress which Negro education has made in fifty years.